

LOTW - Step by Step

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The Logbook of the World is a convenient way to confirm QSOs. In these step-by-step instructions, Tabloid editor Jack Fleming, WAØRJY, takes you through the process of getting signed up and uploading your contacts to the LOTW database. These instructions were originally published in the February - June 2007 Totem Tabloid newsletters. LOTW – Step Ø

By Jack Fleming, WAØRJY

The Logbook of the World (aka LOTA – www.arrl.org/lotw/) is something that everyone in our club should participate in. It's free. It is a much easier (and less expensive!) way to confirm our QSOs with stations around the world. It's a good way to get confirmations on contacts that we make with DXpeditions and DX stations. There's absolutely no downside to it. Well… Maybe one downside – many of us have struggled with the red tape involved in signing up with LOTW (a necessary evil in order to be sure the system is protected from dishonesty). Personally, I found the steps of the process to be a bit bewildering at times – downloading files, sending emails, getting postcards, running programs, uploading files… And all of that has to be done BEFORE you even get to the point of submitting your list of QSOs! YOW!

Well, those confusing days are over! The Totem Tabloid's crack technical staff will be walking you through the entire process during the next few months. One step at a time until we're all done and have our logs included in the LOTW!

This month is Step Zero – Update your logging software. For the purposes of the Logbook of the World, you are going to have to have a computerized log. If you are logging on paper with stacks of paper logbooks filling your basement, then you are just out of luck. Sorry.

But for the majority of you who do use a computer to log, this might be a good time to look into updating your logging software so that it's the most recent version available. Some of the software has improved in recent updates to make submission of new contacts a one button operation after you are registered with LOTW.

Your minimum assignment for the month is to be sure your logging software is capable of producing an ADIF file of your log (you need to submit your data in ADIF format). Check your software's help screens or manual for information on ADIF. You might also find "Export to ADIF" as an option under the "file" menu item at the top of the page.

For extra credit – update your logging software to the most recent version. Not sure where to get your update? Check out <http://www.ac6v.com/logging.htm> for a large list of logging programs with links to their homepages.

I use DX4WIN to log my QSOs (I use N1MM for contests and then import the QSOs into DX4WIN). I checked and found that I'm using version 5.03 of DX4WIN and that the most recent update is 7.02! YOW! Computer years are like dog years – going from version 5.03 to 7.02 is a huge jump. I'm sure they must have improved the software since May of 2001…

So after you have your assignment completed – check back here next month for Step 1 – Installing TQSL when we'll really start the process of getting LOTW installed on your computer and your QSOs uploaded to the database.

LOTW – Step 1

By Jack Fleming, WAØRJY

OK, I assume that everyone has gone through last month's "Step Ø" and have updated any out-of-date logging software that might be in use. This month we will be downloading the latest TQSL software from the ARRL's LOTW website.

But before we get that excitement, there's one more bit of bookkeeping to take care of – your FCC registered address must be correct. Got to <http://wireless2.fcc.gov/ulsApp/UlsSearch/searchLicense.jsp> and put in your callsign. Then check to be sure your mailing address is correct – if not, get it fixed.

Now that you have your updated logging software and a correct address registered with the Federal Communications Commission, go to the LOTW website – www.arrl.org/lotw/ - and go down the page to your operating system to get a download of the software. For most of you, that'll mean the Windows™ download at <http://prdownloads.sourceforge.net/trustedqsl/tqsl-111.exe?download>. Mac and Linux users have a couple options depending on your operating systems – so check the page out and make your selection.

Select "run" from the pop-up screen and it will install the software on your computer. Two programs will appear on your desktop with nifty little icons – TQSL and TQSLCert.

Double click on the TQSLCert icon to create a new certificate request – it will be a file with a .tq5 extension at the end. Save this file to a place where you can find it again – maybe the desktop would be a good spot for now.

Then create an email, attach this .tq5 file, and send it to lotw-logs@arrl.org.

Whew! You're done for another month. Sit back, pop open a cold one, and wait for the mailman to deliver you an

old fashioned postcard (this is where it's important that your FCC address is correct!). It should come in just a week or two. When it does — hand on to it and check back here next month for "Step 2" …

LOTW — Step 2

By Jack Fleming, WAØRJY

I hope that you didn't toss that postcard from the ARRL out with the rest of the junk mail — it's important! Look on the address side of the envelope (right above your name and address) and you should see a number. Well, maybe "number" isn't the right word — a password might be better. It's a combination of numbers and letters — something like B4KV8KJH. That's your secret password to the LOTW.

On the LOTW site (www.arrl.org/lotw/) select "Enter a password from a post card" at the bottom of the menu on the right hand side of the page (in the bright yellow box that says, "LoTW Links" at the top). You might be tempted to select "Logbook Users LOG IN" (at the bottom of the list in the middle of the page) but this would be wrong! So don't do it. Go to the yellow box!

After you've selected the "Enter a password from a post card" option, you'll go to a new page. Here you enter your callsign and your secret password and click on "Submit password".

That's it for another month. Time to sit back and open yet another cold one!

In a few days you'll be getting an email from the ARRL with an attachment. This is a "TQ6 certificate" and I'll tell you what to do with it next month. Until then, relax and enjoy that cold one …

LOTW — Step 3

By Jack Fleming, WAØRJY

Now we're getting somewhere! You have an email with an attachment with a .TQ6 extension. You need to "run" this certificate by double-clicking on the TQ6 attachment icon. Once this is completed — you have gone through all of the "certification" hoops. LOTW believes you are who you are! Congratulations!

Save your information by generating a private key/certificate file with the name <yourcallsign>.P12. Save it to a convenient place on your computer (you can do this by right-clicking the gold seal icon to the left of your callsign in TQSL Cert and then selecting "Save As" — you'll need this file in case your computer crashes so if you want to move to a different machine.

You can now delete all of the .TQ5 and .TQ6 files from your system — you won't be needing them again.

That's enough for now. Next month we'll actually send data to LOTW — so double check that you have the ability to generate ADIF files with your logging software.

LOTW — Step 4

By Jack Fleming, WAØRJY

Now where were we? Oh yeah — time to send in your log!

Remember how I've mentioned that it's important for your logging software to be able to create a file with your log information in ADIF format? We'll now do it. Have your logging software create the ADIF file of all of your contacts. This might take a few minutes. When it's done, be sure to save the file somewhere that you'll be able to find it later. If that sounds tricky, it would be best to save it on your "Desktop" so that you'll know where it is.

Now run the TQSL program (you hopefully have it on your desktop or somewhere that you can find it). Open the File menu (in TQSL) and select "Sign Existing ADIF or Cabrillo File". Follow the step by step instructions (this is where you'll have to know where your ADIF file is stored!) and in the end you'll have a digitally signed .TQ8 file! Congratulations.

Now attach that file to an email and send it to lotw-logs@arrl.org. You'll get a couple emails back from the LOTW server to let you know what it thought about the file you sent it. Hopefully, the news will be encouraging.

To see the status of your QSOs (which ones are confirmed electronically and how many more you need for DXCC) — log on to the LOTW User's Web page at <https://p1k.arrl.org/lotwuser/default>. Enter the username and password that came in the email with your TQ6 file and Voila!

That's it! You are now an official user of LOTW. Congratulations!